

Role of the Facilitator

A facilitator's three most important responsibilities are building a partnership, directing the process, and resolving differences.

Building the Partnership

- Help each participant in the meeting to see the value and worth of each partner
- Encourage family partners to be honest and open with each other
- Ensure participants demonstrate respect for each other
- Make sure the Team has a common purpose and goal
- Express empathy for the pain and concerns communicated
- Use solution-focused questions to keep participants viewing opportunities for change
- Help the Team work through differences

Directing the Process

- Encourage participants to talk directly to each other
- Cue the group so its efforts develop a plan that will work for the family
- Use reflections to let the family and Team know what is being expressed both verbally and nonverbally
- Refocus discussion toward the positive, toward the task, and toward solutions
- Use interruptions only to maintain ground rules and, when necessary, to bring the group back on task
- Use summarization purposefully to focus the group and reinforce agreement
- Use solution-focused questions to draw out options and help the Team use solutions that have worked in the past
- Add key points of information if the family members forget
- Offer support

Resolving Differences

Assess and decide if all family and Team members should discuss the conflict or differences. To make this decision, consider these questions:

Does the issue involve the whole Team?

- Does the issue need the whole Team to solve it?
- How might this conflict impact the development and implementation of the plan?
- Does this conflict influence the ability of the partners or family to assure greater safety, well being, and permanence for the child?
- Do you need help or support from someone who is not a participant in this meeting to resolve this issue?

Use strategies to build consensus:

- Clarify the areas of agreement and disagreement
- Help participants lay out options and then see their choices
- Identify higher principles that members can agree on

Use skills and techniques for conflict resolution:

- Clarify what the real disagreement is about
- Find the common goal
- Generate as many alternatives as possible
- Focus on points of agreement